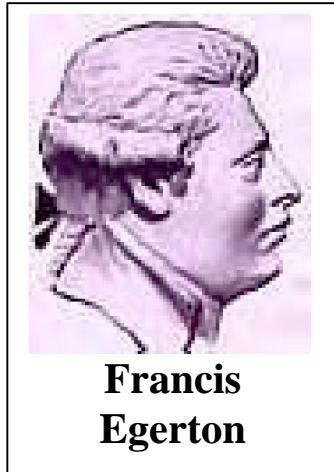


MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL & BRIDGEWATER NAVIGATION

Dave Hill

The Bridgewater Canal was built by Francis Egerton, 3rd Duke of Bridgewater, to transport coal from his mines to the growing town of Manchester.



**Francis
Egerton**

The narrow boat canal was given Royal assent in 1759 and was finished in 1776. The canal cost £20,000,000 to be built and in its life had revenues of only £8,000,000! Egerton, later known as the “canal Duke” lost a fortune on this enterprise but managed to regain his fortune in old age and died a wealthy man. Trustees managed the Bridgewater canal until 1872 when it was sold to a new company, for £1,200,000 The Bridgewater Navigation Co. They in turn sold the canal to the newly formed Manchester Ship

Canal Co in 1885. The Bridgewater canal was extended via the Trent and Mersey Canal to Runcorn on the Mersey. Thus Manchester was linked with Liverpool and the sea but the canal was not navigable at certain times of drought and could only be used by barges that meant offloading cargoes from the ocean going ships. The merchants of Manchester had to pay the Port of Liverpool heavy dues for this and the situation got worse as the size of ocean going ships increased.

BRIDGEWATER NAVIGATION CO. LIMITED, **(FELLOWS, MORTON & CO., AGENTS,)**

CARRIERS BY WATER to and from LIVERPOOL, BIRKENHEAD, MANCHESTER, RUNCORN, WARRINGTON, THE STAFFORDSHIRE POTTERIES, WOLVERHAMPTON, BIRMINGHAM, and THE SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE and EAST WORCESTERSHIRE IRON DISTRICTS.

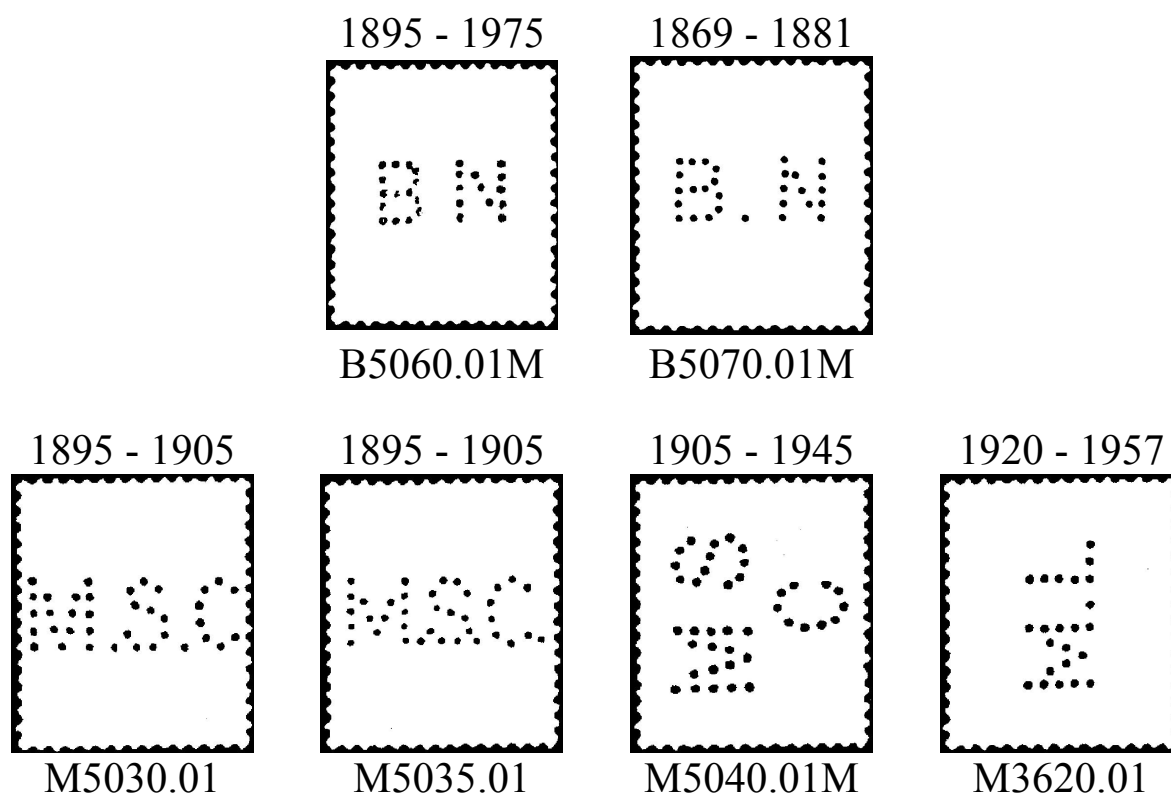
HEAD OFFICES:—Albert Square, Manchester; Duke's Dock, Liverpool;
Albion Wharf, Wolverhampton; Horsley Offices, Tipton;
Great Charles Street, Birmingham.

This held up the expansion of trade in Manchester and plans were put forward for a ship canal to Manchester as early as 1824 but the

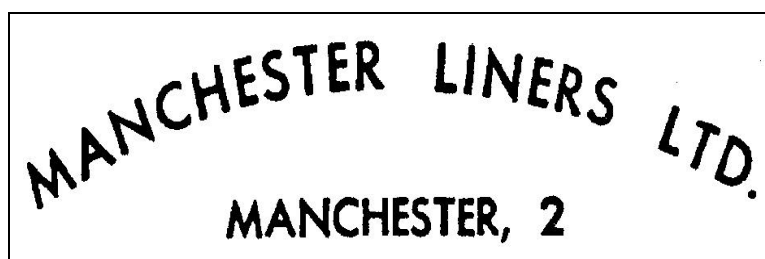
proposal met heavy opposition from Liverpool. The Manchester Ship Canal Company was formed in 1885 and work on the canal was started in 1887 and was finally finished in 1893. It incorporated the Bridgewater Canal. The contract was at first let to a single contractor who appointed an engineer to supervise each of the eight sections. These were Eastham to Ellesmere Port, to Ince, to Weston Point, to Norton, to Latchford, to Warburton, to Barton and to Manchester. The route is Manchester, Eastham, Weston, Runcorn, past Warrington, Latchford, Irlam, Barton, Salford and Manchester – a total of 35½ miles. Saltport was a Port on the Mersey that thrived whilst the canal was being built but vanished once it was complete.

From the outset it was obvious that the canal needed its own shipping line and Manchester Liners were formed in 1898. The early trade was with Canada. Manchester Liners were an early adopter of containers.

Bridgewater Navigation, Manchester Ship Canal and Manchester Liners all used perfin. Two dies are shown as used by Bridgewater Navigation in the current Tomkins – B5060.01M and B5070.01M



Very similar dies B5060.02. 02a. 03, 03a are shown in the Edwards catalogue but it is now known that these are strikes from a multi-headed die. *[Ed:- see next article by Roy Gault]*



I have an accumulation of the BN perfin with various postmarks and I would be interested to know what dates and postmarks members have. The earlier die B5070.01 has been recorded in Manchester, Liverpool, Rochdale, Runcorn, Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent, Preston Brook and Warrington. The later die B5060.01M has been recorded Ashton-under-Lyne, Leigh, Liverpool, Manchester, Rochdale, Runcorn & Warrington.

Some may have been used during the canal construction. Later ones may have been used in connection with the running of the canal and may have postmarks along its route. Strangely although the Bridgewater Canal was incorporated into the Manchester Ship Canal in 1885 the BN perfin B5060.01M was not produced until after this date and continued to be used into the 1970's.

I am aware this is probably a very sketchy history of this enterprise but I was only able to, get one thin book on the canal. Perhaps a member in Manchester can tell us more. Apparently there is a museum near the canal, they might even have a perfin machine!